CHAPTER 5

The Inter-parliamentary Delegations of the European Parliament: National and European Priorities at Work

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Introduction

In June 2000, a report of the Western European Union (WEU) Assembly claimed, “parliamentary cooperation has been superseded by ‘parliamentary diplomacy.’" Certainly, parliamentary involvement in foreign policy issues has intensified, especially since the beginning of the 1990s. Relations between parliaments from all over the world are more frequent and coordinated than ever before and, in some cases, they even have given place to fully-fledged inter-parliamentary bodies. The European Union (EU) itself is a labyrinth of inter-parliamentary relations between parliaments of different levels. Within the EU, there are institutionalized links between national parliaments (COSAC), links between national parliaments and the EP (Conference of Chairmen of the Foreign Affairs Committees), but also between EU national parliaments and parliaments abroad (Assemblies of the WEU, Council of Europe and OSCE), between the EP and parliaments abroad (inter-parliamentary delegations, joint parliamentary assemblies, and others) and, looping the loop, there are even some parliamentary assemblies that link the EP, national parliaments and those of third countries (NATO Assembly, Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, and others).

1 The author is grateful to all Polish, Spanish and German MEPs and members of the EP’s Secretariat who agreed to be interviewed and to answer the questionnaires. Special thanks to Raül Romeva and Maria Pilar d’Orey for their kind support during the research stay in the European Parliament. The author is also particularly thankful to Michal Natorski, María Ángeles Sabiote and Erika Ruiz for their valuable comments.

2 WEU Assembly, Parliamentary diplomacy: the role of international assemblies, A/1685, 6 June 2000. The rapporteur (Vera Squarcialupi) provides an overview of the different interparliamentary bodies created since the Interparliamentary Union was established in 1889.

3 Within the EU, there are institutionalized links between national parliaments (COSAC), links between national parliaments and the EP (Conference of Chairmen of the Foreign Affairs Committees), but also between EU national parliaments and parliaments abroad (Assemblies of the WEU, Council of Europe and OSCE), between the EP and parliaments abroad (interparliamentary delegations, joint parliamentary assemblies, and others) and, looping the loop, there are even some parliamentary assemblies that link the EP, national parliaments and those of third countries (NATO Assembly, Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, and others).
chapter analyses one of such inter-parliamentary relations within the framework of the EU, namely that of European Parliament (EP) delegations with third countries’ parliaments.

The role of these delegations has deserved scant attention from scholars dealing with European foreign policy, and the regular media rarely covers their activities. One of the motives for such disdain is that these inter-parliamentary relations are often considered of little use, as being nothing more than “political tourism” or a costly “cheap talk.” Therefore, the first aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of how this network of delegations works and, at the same time, to assess its value, departing from the opinions provided by some Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) themselves and members of the EP’s Secretariat.

The second section of this chapter focuses on the composition of the delegations and the role of MEPs within them. The aim is to analyse the interplay between national foreign policy priorities and those of the European political groups (PG) in the organization and functioning of the delegations. The following questions will be addressed: Does the distribution of MEPs among the delegations reflect national foreign policy priorities? If this is the case, what are the parliamentarians’ perceptions of their role within these delegations? What kind of coordination is there between MEPs to make delegations work? Is this coordination based on nationality or on the European political group to which MEPs belong?

This study is circumscribed to the MEPs of three countries (Poland, Spain and Germany) mainly for pragmatic reasons, but also because they are member states with different length of work within the EU and also because they have very different foreign policy priorities. However, it is assumed that certain degree of generalization is possible. Most of this section has been constructed using interviews and questionnaires answered by MEPs from the above-mentioned countries.

Methodological problems in the course of the elaboration of this chapter have been manifold, some of which are worth mentioning to explain some of the shortages of the present analysis. First, written sources of information are very scarce. There is no in-depth work on the task of the delegations, and available primary sources (minutes of the meetings of inter-parliamentary meetings, EP reports, debates, and others) are only recent documents, so it has been very difficult to provide detailed background information for this research. Second, specific information, for example the
budget for inter-parliamentary delegations (IPDs), was unavailable, despite the various oral and written requests made to various instances of the EU.

Third, most of this chapter was written on the basis of interviews held with MEPs and answers to a questionnaire distributed among selected MEPs, precisely those who are playing an important role within their delegations. Thus, there is a chance the sample may be biased. To overcome this bias, MEPs were not questioned only about their role within their respective delegations, but also about their opinion on the functioning of other delegations and the activity of other MEPs in general. Interviewees were guaranteed that their opinions were to be kept strictly anonymous, although in some cases, they agreed to appear in a list of interviewees (see the list provided at the end of the chapter.)

Political tourism or valuable parliamentary diplomacy?: Some caveats

During interviews with MEPs and members of the EP’s Secretariat, the expressions of “political tourism” and “valuable parliamentary diplomacy” were both recurrently used to refer to the task of the delegations. The aim of this research, however, is not to conclude if either appraisal suits better the reality of IPDs, particularly because things are not strictly black or white. There are many types of inter-parliamentary units and, consequently, a great variety of purposes. Moreover, the degree of relations maintained between the EU and the countries with which the EP has set up IPDs is a fundamental variable to determine their role and potential. In what follows, this variety of inter-parliamentary units will be sketched and their functions reviewed to throw some light on what is the true value of IPDs.

Types of inter-parliamentary units and their organization

Although they tend to be grouped under the label ‘inter-parliamentary delegations’, there are many types of delegations, depending on their origin and fundamental purpose. Most of them are established to fulfil the obligation of opening up parliamentary channels of communication set out by the Community’s external agreements. Others have been established by the EP on its own initiative or because the parliaments of third countries requested them. Regardless of what were the reasons behind the creation of any of these IPDs,
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The truth is that the increase in the number and type of delegations in the course of the past three decades clearly reflects the progress the EU has made towards becoming an international actor and the incremental consolidation of the European Parliament itself, as well as the changes that have taken place in the European and international arenas.

The clearest example of such underlying changes in the European context lies in the increase in the number of delegations appointed to ‘Joint Parliamentary Committees’ (JPCs), that is delegations formally established within the framework of association agreements, which are generally signed with candidate countries. These so-called 'accession JPCs' are obviously disbanded when the candidate country enters the Union, so they tend to be more short-lived than other delegations, with the exception, of course, of the EU-Turkey JPC that, with 40 years of existence, is one of the oldest interparliamentary delegation of the EP. This fact itself reflects one of the paradoxes of Europe’s enlargement process. After the fifth enlargement of the EU, only 4 from the 14 previous accession JPCs remain (see Annex I). The reduction in the number of JPCs, however, has been partially counterbalanced by the conclusion of association agreements with Chile and Mexico during the last parliamentary period, and the new JPCs set up with Croatia and FYROM.

The fall of the Soviet Union also brought about a new type of delegation for the ‘Parliamentary Cooperation Committees’ (PCCs), which arose from the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements signed with the countries of the former USSR during the 1990s. These PCCs, as the JPCs, have the formal prerogative of following the development of the agreements and making recommendations to the Cooperation Council, in the case of the former, and the Association Council, for the latter.

‘Inter-parliamentary delegations’, strictly speaking, are those delegations set up to promote inter-parliamentary contacts between the EP and the parliamentary bodies of third countries, regions, and even Parliamentary Assemblies, as that of NATO. The first of them, the delegation for relations with the United States, was established in 1972, even before the EP was a directly elected body.

But it was after holding direct elections for the first time in 1979 that IPDs began to mushroom for various reasons. Most of them were established by the European Parliament as a natural response to international events or as a demonstration of its will to be closely involved in such affairs. The setting up of IPDs entailed in some occasions a great symbolism. For example, at the
very beginning of September 1991, some MEPs proposed to set up a
permanent delegation with the Baltic States as the best symbolic gesture to
show the recognition of their independence. But, in other cases, the demand
to establish permanent IPDs came from parliaments of third countries, as
were the cases of Japan in 1978 or South Korea in 1985-86. Currently, there
are 20 of them (see Annex I).

Apart from these three modalities of delegation, there are also more
structured inter-parliamentary relations embodied in ‘joint parliamentary
assemblies’ as that of the EU-ACP countries or the Euro-Med Parliamentary
Assembly, as well as other looser inter-parliamentary contacts as the EP-Latin
America Parliamentary Conference or the Transatlantic Legislators' Dialogue.
This chapter focuses on IPDs, JPCs and PCCs. However, the work
of the EU-ACP Joint Parliamentary Assembly is also worth mentioning
because of its high level of activity and its degree of institutionalization,
which, for many MEPs, is a model of regional inter-parliamentary relations
that should be set up with the parliaments of other regions. The Lomé
Convention—the document that created a partnership between the EC and 77
countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific—called for the
establishment of the EU-ACP Assembly in 1975. This assembly, which
gathers together 154 participants (one representative from each ACP country
and 77 from the EP), considers itself a fully-fledged international
parliamentary body and not only a meeting forum for the delegations of the
European Parliament and the ACP countries.

4 The Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly is, since 2003, the heir of the EuroMed
Parliamentary Forum. It embodies the parliamentary dimension within the framework of
the Barcelona Process and was set up precisely to invigorate the process, which has been
increasingly flagging since its inception in 1995. It brings together parliamentary
representatives from all EU member states and all Mediterranean countries that take part in
the process, as well as some MEPs.
5 The EP-Latin America Parliamentary Conference is a biannual conference that brings
together representatives from the delegations of the EP that work on issues related to Latin
America and members of the Latin American Parliament (Parlatino) and other Latin
6 The Transatlantic Legislators’ Dialogue joins representatives from the EP and the US
Congress. The difference between this Dialogue and an interparliamentary delegation is
that there is a more permanent coordination as a way to demonstrate the reciprocal will to
maintain an enhanced dialogue. In this case, there are a Steering Committee and a Senior
Level Group, which are composed of high-ranking officials from the European
Commission, the EU Presidency and the US Administration.
A last type of parliamentary unit is the *ad hoc* delegations, which as their name indicates are created in response to particular political events and, more often, for observing electoral processes. They are usually made up by between 3 and 5 members. Likewise, the EP sometimes contributes to observation missions undertaken by the Council of Europe or the United Nations. *Ad hoc* delegations may also be set up to participate in international conferences --for instance, within the United Nations (UN), the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Group of Seven (G-7) or the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The *ad hoc* delegations are normally singled out as the clearest example of the impact and efficiency of the work of delegations, since they are set up to fulfil a specific purpose.

Currently, the panorama of delegations has changed considerably, although their number has remained nearly the same (they have decreased from 35 –last term– to 34). As stated already, 10 JPCs have disappeared, but other delegations have been born from splitting some previous delegations: the two delegations for Latin America during the last term branched out into five; the former delegation for relations with Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova gave place to a separate IPD for each of these countries; and separate delegations were also set up with Iran and with the Korean Peninsula. In the opposite direction, the delegation for the countries of the European Economic Area and that for Norway, Iceland and Sweden have been put together. The reason behind this reorganization is mainly the different speed and degree of relations between the EU and third countries.

The number of members of each EP delegation varies considerably, from the 10 members of the IPD to NATO’s Parliamentary Assembly to the 34 of the delegation for relations with the US. Each of these delegations has a similar number of deputies from the counterpart Parliament. During the present parliamentary term, nearly all MEPs are involved in at least one of the 35 delegations. In 1994 some reforms were introduced after which the major political groups abandoned the practice of having every MEP be a part of a delegation (Corbett et al. 2003). In the case of Germany, for example, only two thirds of parliamentarians were involved in one of the 27 delegations in 1994.

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7 The two former delegations were those for relations with countries of South America and for relations with Central America and Mexico. The current ones are: EU-Mexico JPC, EU-Chile JPC, a delegation for relations with the countries of Central America, a delegation for relations with the countries of the Andean Community and a delegation for relations with the countries of Mercosur.
But with the progressive increase in the number of delegations, the number of MEPs participating in them also grew. The 2004 enlargement was expected to alter the situation because of the addition of 131 new MEPs and because, in principle, the number of delegations was to be reduced. However, the number of delegations has remained the same and virtually all MEPs participate in at least one delegation.

Each delegation holds an inter-parliamentary meeting once or twice a year, alternately in the Parliament and in the partner country. Besides, the EP delegations also meet in Brussels and Strasbourg in order to prepare the agenda for future visits. Each delegation has a bureau, formed by a chairman and two vice-chairmen, which plays a central role in organizing the agenda of those meetings. In fact, in the opinion of all the MEPs that were interviewed for this study, the level of activity of each delegation depends greatly on the role of the bureau.

The Committee of Foreign Affairs of the EP (AFET) is responsible for preparing and monitoring all the activities related to this inter-parliamentary network. More technically, within the Secretariat of the EP, Direction B of the Directorate-General 3 (External Policies) is in charge of all IPDs. Although the task of the Secretariat is organisational in nature, it plays a very powerful role, given that through the establishment of the agenda it can sometimes have an indirect influence on the substance of these encounters.

Another important body in the organization of the delegations’ work is the Conference of Delegation Chairs. Its task is to prepare the calendar of future inter-parliamentary meetings and to draw up implementing rules for the functioning of delegations. Another task that is not explicitly stated in the rules of procedure is, in the words of one MEP, "jostling with the Budgets Committee for funds that enable an appropriate number of MEPs of a delegation to travel to a given country." It is precisely the Chairman of the delegation who has the responsibility to decide the number of MEPs that shall travel, with a high limit of 2/3 of the members of the delegation.

**Functions and dysfunctions of the EP’s delegations**

As stated above, the functions of IPDs vary in great manner from country to country and depend on what kind of delegation is being considered. For instance, the role of the delegation to the EU-Bulgaria JPC, which has the formal prerogative of supervising the implementation of the accession agreement, unfortunately has very little to do with the role of the delegation
for relations with Belarus, a country with which the EU has not managed yet to ratify the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement and where no parliamentary nor other official visits are welcomed by the Belarusian authorities.

These facts notwithstanding, the task of EP delegations always implies a two-way process. On the one hand, the permanent contact through these various inter-parliamentary structures provides the EP with first-hand knowledge on the specific situation of each country. Both the quantity and quality of the information may be very high, since the dialogue during the encounters has an all-encompassing character, that is that the EP delegation does not only meet parliamentarians and officials, but also representatives of civil society, groups suffering from specific problems, economic groups, members of opposition parties, and others. As a former MEP put it, delegations represent “the eyes and ears of the EP” (Viola 2000: 27).

But, on the other, delegations are also the EP’s "mouth", since they are used simultaneously as a “resonance box” or as a mouthpiece of the positions adopted within the AFET or the EP as a whole. In this sense, almost all the interviewees considered that representing the EP is one of the delegations’ main functions. And, in many cases, MEPS went further and responded that delegations not only represent the EP as such, but the EU as a whole. This role as the EP’s mouthpiece acquires special relevance in crisis situations in other countries, where these delegations often play the role of mediators and/or facilitators of dialogue. Therefore, the most accurate way to describe the general task of IPDs would be to consider them as transmission belts, that is a direct channel for the exchange of information, worries and desires between the EP and third countries and, thus, for improving mutual understanding and deepening relations.

Apart from being an instrument for furthering mutual understanding, the know-how transmitted through inter-parliamentary contacts has demonstrated its potential to be used to influence both third countries and other EU institutions. Regarding the first use, the EP can press or influence third countries in very different domains. For example, one of the main concerns of delegations is improving human rights policies in other countries; delegations can raise this question during their visits in various forms, whether explicitly, for instance by presenting a list of political prisoners and asking if they are given fair treatment, or indirectly, by asking to visit a prison, or visiting regions or minorities whose rights are violated by governments.
Another important value that delegations try to promote is that of regionalism and multilateralism, especially in those areas where there is still a long way to go. This is especially the case of Latin America and Asia. As one MEP put it, "our task is to spread the value of the new multilateralism, the need and advantages of supranationalism." The range of topics on which the EU tries to put some pressure also includes economic considerations, especially in those delegations where trade questions are the main substance of inter-parliamentary dialogue. For example, one of the main tasks of the delegation for relations with Japan is to facilitate the progressive removal of trade barriers.

Finally, a vaguer but often cited way of influencing third countries is the alleged "socializing effect" of inter-parliamentary encounters on third countries. This is particularly the case of the work of the JPCs, where candidate countries become familiarized with the functioning of the EP. In other MEP’s view, the socializing effect can also be seen in the simple fact that “this parliamentary dialogue is a way to promote a more active involvement of parliaments in foreign affairs issues.” In other words, delegations are promoting a “parliamentarisation of foreign policy”, what is itself considered a valuable contribution.

Regarding the use of information to steer the decision-making process within the Council and the Commission in favour of specific projects, there are many options. Since the EP has hardly any formal prerogative in the field of foreign policy issues, one may think that delegations' reports and recommendations are fruitless efforts that go by the wayside vis-à-vis the Commission and the Council. However, by virtue of the EP’s competences in external relations, delegations play a significant role in the monitoring of agreements that need the EP’s assent, whether for their approval or their extension. The EP's budgetary authority is also important to press for the right application of the various funds allocated to countries within the framework of agreements (TACIS, MEDA, CARDS, and others.) Therefore, it could be stated that the role of delegations is not merely that of providing a channel for parliamentary diplomacy, but also one of facilitating parliamentary control.

8 Unlike the committees, delegations do not have the right to appear before or present reports to the plenary, but they can submit written reports and recommendations about the outcomes of their inter-parliamentary meetings to the AFET.
But delegations may also exert their political influence on other EU institutions via less formal prerogatives. A recent example was the cancellation of the EU-ACP Joint Parliamentary Assembly meeting because the EP did not accept two representatives of Zimbabwe who were given visas by Brussels authorities although they were covered by the Council’s restrictive measures on the issuing of visas on grounds of serious violations of human rights.\(^9\) This episode had the purpose to make clear that the EP does not accept double standards from the part of the EU. As stated by Stelios Stavridis (2002) “Parliaments often act as ‘moral tribunes’. That is to say that \textit{Realpolitik} can and does exist in national foreign policies but there are other elements of a more idealistic, pluralistic kind, which are usually expressed in parliamentary bodies, debating houses.”

Finally, delegations have the indirect function of distributing responsibilities among MEPs. Especially those MEPs holding a chairmanship or vice-chairmanship in delegations feel responsible themselves for the adequate functioning of the delegation or even as advocates of third countries and thus are supposed to mobilize quickly when events so require. For example, after the catastrophe of the tsunami in East Asia, the Chairman of the AFET, Elmar Brok, and the Chairman of the delegation for relations with South-East Asian countries, Hartmut Nassauer, promoted a joint meeting of the Committees of Foreign Affairs, Development and Budgets with the ambassadors of Sri Lanka, India, Thailand and Malaysia, and committed themselves to speed up the delivery of aid for these countries. Besides, the chairwoman of the EP’s delegation to the ACP Joint Parliamentary Assembly, Glenys Kinnock, also exerted pressure on the EP to take into account those African countries affected by the catastrophe.\(^{10}\)

Despite the above-mentioned examples of the successful influence of delegations and many others that could be presented, “one swallow does not make a summer.” According to the assessment of many of the MEPs interviewed, the political impact of delegations is generally very low. Some of them even manifested their scepticism about the outcomes of such meetings, because, more often than not, they are only an interchange of commonplaces or cheap talk. Others even said that the public character of inter-parliamentary meetings does not favour a frank dialogue. For this reason, for example,

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\(^{10}\) \textit{Agence Europe}, 6 January 2005.
during the meeting of the delegation to the EU-Turkey JPC in Brussels, the 3 February 2005, one MEP proposed to maintain the following inter-parliamentary meeting behind closed doors, because of the sensibility of the matters that parliamentarians needed to address. In another MEP’s opinion, inter-parliamentary meetings sometimes turn out to be a “place for the psychodrama” without bringing about any tangible result.

Many other reasons for being sceptical about the role of delegations were given. To some extent, the Council was to blame for this situation. When asked about the degree of coordination and information provided by the Council, nearly all the MEPs interviewed stated that they were not satisfied with it. While MEPs accepted that some influence and feedback is possible with the Commission, there is not such thing with the Council. This perception of having scarce room of manoeuvre has repercussions on the MEPs’ attitudes towards these delegations, in the sense that it is discouraging to travel to some countries where there is a great demand for Europe, when the EP itself has no prerogatives in foreign policy and only very limited ones in the case of external relations. As an MEP regretted, inter-parliamentary encounters sometimes raise false expectations about the EU in third countries.

However, this does not mean that MEPs are not to blame for the lack of impulse in some delegations. As stated by many interviewees, the activity of MEPs in the delegations is, at best, their third or fourth priority in comparison with their other tasks as parliamentarians. Others noted that, although there are MEPs that are really experts and have a great interest in the target country or region of the delegation in which they take part, for others, it is only a way to fulfil an obligation and to engage in "political tourism." Many of the MEPs interviewed were critical of the EP in general, especially regarding the level of participation in the working meetings of the EP delegations in Brussels or Strasbourg, sometimes lower than the number of MEPs that travel abroad with the delegation. According to some MEPs, the low level of attendance to those meetings –intended to prepare future visits and to hear the opinions of diplomatic personnel of the country being dealt with as well as of Commission officials– is sometimes embarrassing, counterproductive for the EP’s image, and even damaging for the relations with third countries.

The economic cost of maintaining the system of IPDs is another matter of concern for parliamentarians and other officials working in EU institutions, but especially for the wider public. The fact that virtually every MEP is in at
least one delegation has aroused harsh criticisms and has perpetuated the cliché of considering the Parliament “the biggest agency of political tourism.”

The Parliament itself has attempted many times to rationalise the activity of the delegations. The most important initiative in this sense was implemented in 1994, when the major political groups decided to stop the practice of having every single member be a part of a delegation. This measure, as Corbett et al. (2003) calculate, resulted in a dramatic budgetary decrease: “the cost of delegations fell from 2 million Euros in 1993 to an average of 800,000 Euros between 1995 and 1998.” Since 1999, the rationalisation has been made mostly by reducing the number of MEPs travelling in each delegation. Many of the MEPs interviewed deemed that the amount dedicated to delegations was not that high, in comparison with the total budget of the EP and, for example, the expenses incurred in by the monthly travel to and from Strasbourg of the whole Parliament. However, some of them admitted that they sometimes deliberately tried to hide their travels from the wider public, to avoid adding fuel to the fire of the existing prejudices towards the EP.

Criticism towards the way delegations coordinate with the AFET was also manifested. In some MEPs’ opinion, the AFET is already overloaded to deal with the work of delegations for countries that are not in the agenda. In fact, the 1998 Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) annual report already called for the EP’s Bureau and its General Secretary to “ensure a closer cooperation between the AFET and Parliament's delegations at political as well as at administrative level.”

But despite all these problems, the overall assessment by MEPs was that delegations constitute one of the most valuable instruments of foreign action that the EP has. Even when it is sometimes difficult to see their true effectiveness, the MEPs and members of the Secretariat interviewed for this study considered that delegations constitute an original form of parliamentary action.

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11 In words of a former Commission official.
12 From the budget of the European Parliament that is available in the Archives of the EP, it is not possible to calculate the current amount dedicated to delegations, since there is no budgetary line for them. Oral and written petitions were made to the Budgets Committee of the European Parliament and via Le courrier du citoyen, to know if an approximate amount could be provided as reference, but no response was obtained.
diplomacy that should be improved and furthered. On the basis of their opinions, one could state that this parliamentary diplomacy is not only a means for improving mutual understanding and exerting influence, but also an end in itself. The parliamentarisation of foreign policy is sort of a matter of principle for parliamentarians because, as one MEP put it, "we, as legislators, have the duty to have a more plural vision of the world."

Another recurrent opinion was that, as European foreign policy acquires a higher profile, the work of the EP’s delegations has progressively become more relevant and prestigious. The role of MEPs in the delegations is also increasingly acknowledged by external actors, since the vast majority of the interviewees affirmed that they regularly receive information and demands of various lobbying groups on activities related to their delegation (official representations of countries, NGOs, firms and even subnational governments of member states). As one MEP stated, “delegations were formerly considered as an agency of political tourism, whereas now they are seen as useful instruments that in case they did not exist, they should be invented.”

**Do national foreign policy priorities matter? Why and what for? The cases of Poland, Spain and Germany**

The Eurochamber has always been considered to be at the forefront of European integration. Especially in foreign policy, the various annual reports of the AFET Committee have always insisted on the need to further both the CFSP and the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), to make them ever more ‘common’, by increasing the Commission’s and the EP’s roles while eliminating the requirement of unanimity, as well as by setting up a common European diplomacy to promote Europe’s strategic culture. Furthermore, MEPs have always ranked the highest in their degree of “European socialization,” when compared to other officials working in other EU institutions. Thus, when studying the EP’s stances in foreign policy and external relations issues, it is generally treated as a whole. However, this section looks inside the EP to analyse whether MEPs tend to defend national

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14 However, some thorough analyses on the performance of the EP’s Political Groups in foreign policy issues can be found in the studies of Donatella Viola (2000) and Karl-Heinz Neunreither (1990.) See also Fulvio Attiná (1990), who refers to foreign policy among other areas.
foreign policy priorities within the European Parliament and if this is reflected in the composition and work of IPDs.

The composition of inter-parliamentary delegations: A reflection of national foreign policy priorities?
The way delegations are composed is essentially the same as that of EP Committees. Political Groups have to present their list of candidacies to the Conference of Presidents. In order to make the appointments within the group, MEPs manifest their preferences according to the existing delegations. The primary decisions are normally taken inside the different national delegations within the Political Group or within small parties inscribed in a bigger Group (for example, the European Free Alliance, within the Group Greens-EFA.) When there is competition for being a member, or holding a chairmanship or vice-chairmanship, the group votes between the nominated colleagues, normally in response to criteria of expertise in the area of the delegation, seniority and prestige of the various MEPs concurring, as well as responding to internal equilibriums among the different national delegations of the Group. Once the candidatures have been presented, the Conference of Presidents submits a proposal to the Parliament that should, as much as possible, reflect the overall composition of the Parliament.

When analysing the delegations’ composition, it can be seen that the balance between political forces and countries is maintained as far as the number of chairmanships and vice-chairmanships is concerned, as well as regarding the political pluralism within the membership of each delegation. However, when looking at the nationality of the MEPs of each delegation, a concentration of MEPs of some countries in specific delegations becomes apparent (see Annex I.) The different distribution patterns for Polish, Spanish and German MEPs follows this feature.

Distribution of Polish MEPs. As shown in the figure below, the case of Polish MEPs clearly reflects that Poland’s priority is the Eastern dimension of the EU, given that 40% of that country’s MEPs are members of delegations for post-Soviet countries (and, a majority of them, specifically take part in those for Belarus, Ukraine and Russia.) The tenure of chairmanships and vice-chairmanships is also crystal clear in this regard: the two chairmanships held by Polish MEPs are those of the EU-Ukraine PCC and the delegation for relations with Belarus; the four vice-chairmanships are held in the delegations
for Ukraine, Moldova, NATO and Australia and New Zealand. The importance attributed to this region is also seen in the seniority of the Polish MEPs that are part of the delegations for Ukraine, Belarus and Russia.\textsuperscript{15}

\textbf{Figure 5.1. Distribution of Polish MEPs among delegations (2004-2009).}

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\begin{figure}[h]
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{pie_chart.png}
\caption{Distribution of Polish MEPs among delegations (2004-2009).}
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\textit{Distribution of Spanish MEPs.} The unequal distribution of Spanish MEPs among delegations is even clearer than in the case of Polish MEPs. As shown in the figure below, the distribution reflects perfectly Spain’s two traditional priorities in foreign policy: the Mediterranean and Latin America (72\% of Spanish MEPs are in delegations related with these two regions). The attribution of chairmanships and vice-chairmanships is also revealing in this regard. The two chairmanships held by Spanish MEPs are that of the delegation for relations with Central America and the one for relations with the Maghreb countries. And regarding the four vice-chairmanships, two are held in the delegation for relations with Central America, another in the delegation for relations with the countries of Mercosur and the last one in that for relations with Andean countries.

\textsuperscript{15} Jerzy Buzek (former Prime Minister,) Bronislaw Geremek (former Foreign Affairs Minister,) Janusz Onyszkiewicz (former Defence Minister,) Jacek Saryusz-Wolski (former Minister for European Affairs,) Marek Siwiec (Chairman of the delegation to Ukraine and former Secretary of State in the Presidential Chancellery as well as head of the Office of National Security,) and Bogdan Klich (Chairman of the delegation to Belarus and former Vice-minister of Defence.)
This distribution is not exceptional for Spanish MEPs, since in previous parliamentary periods the case has been basically the same. Spanish MEPs have traditionally held the chairmanships of the delegations for relations with Latin American countries too (specially that of Central America and Mexico, which had always been led by a Spanish MEP), as well as the chairmanship or vice-chairmanship of the delegation for relations with the Maghreb.

Figure 5.2. Distribution of Spanish MEPs among delegations (2004-2009).

Source: Elaborated by the author from EP documents.

Distribution of German MEPs. Unlike the case of Polish and Spanish MEPs, the distribution of German MEPs does not reflect any special concentration in the delegations of any geographical region in particular. Neither do the chairmanships indicate any significant pattern of preference for concrete delegations. But this also reflects Germany’s traditional role within the EU as the biggest member state and its foreign policy priorities. Germany is more focused on promoting some horizontal issues than in concentrating its efforts on some specific regions. In other words, Germany has been a keen promoter of European integration and multilateral institutions, of trade liberalization and of democracy and human rights, responding to the self-images of Germany as Handelsstaat and Zivilmacht (commercial state, civil power.)
During previous legislatures, things were slightly different, due to the existence of JPCs with the Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs), now disbanded. Due to Germany’s central role in the fifth enlargement process of the EU, about 30% of German MEPs were, unsurprisingly, appointed to those delegations. However, even with this 30% of MEPs dedicated to CEECs, the distribution of German MEPs was quite balanced vis-à-vis other regions. Regarding chairmanships and vice-chairmanships, there is some continuity too. For example, some delegations have been headed by German MEPs during the last three or four parliamentary terms (delegation with ASEAN countries, delegation for relations with South-East Europe).

**Figure 5.3.** Distribution of German MEPs among delegations (2004-2009).

![Distribution of German MEPs among delegations](image)

Source: Elaborated by the author from EP documents.

**Explaining the attitudes and performance of Polish, Spanish and German MEPs within the delegations**

Taking into account the evidence that national priorities or sensibilities matter when dealing with foreign policy in the EP, one may argue that “the deep distrust and highly nationalistic nature” for which member states have recurrently been criticized by the EP,\(^\text{16}\) is also replicated in the activities of

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MEPs when dealing with foreign policy issues. On the basis of this perspective, a zero-sum game attitude should be expected from MEPs of different countries as they rival each other and coordinate themselves to introduce their own priorities for the benefit of their own country. However, a more nuanced analysis would indicate that MEPs do not choose specific delegations following a narrow conception of the national interest, but rather base their choices on a broader idea of bringing their expertise and interest in concrete regions to steer the EP and other EU institutions in the direction of what they consider important for European foreign policy as a whole.

Attitudes and performance of Polish MEPs. The task of Poland’s MEPs is the most difficult to assess, given its very recent accession to the EU. However, the events in Ukraine during the presidential elections of 2004 have afforded Polish MEPs the opportunity to make a very active use of delegations and to reveal their priorities and expectations about EP mechanisms, and EU foreign policy in general, more assertively.

As stated by a Polish MEP, the reason for Poles to be involved in the delegations of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus is that relations with these countries are a matter of “vital Polish interest”. Polish elites have always been keen to criticise the EU for its inaction and the reactive policy towards this region and for having “a ‘Russia first’ policy with possible harmful consequences for Polish security interests” (Natorski 2004: 17). In the words of a Polish MEP, “we—as other new countries' MEPs—have a special experience on Russian imperial policies in the region and it should be transferred to European politics”. Others criticise the EU for failing to grasp what is really at stake in the transition processes of post-Soviet republics and its ignorance about countries as near to its own territory as Ukraine. As put by the MEP and former Defence Minister of Poland, Janusz Onyszkiewicz, regarding Ukraine, “most deputies in the European Parliament treat Ukraine as if it were some sort of Zanzibar in Eastern Europe”.

Therefore, long time before its entrance to the EU, all Polish political parties had stated that their aim would be to “revamp the EU's Eastern policy by giving it more muscle (...), shape EU policy towards Russia, Ukraine and other ex-Soviet republics, and contribute its own vast experience in the field to provide its Eastern

partners with a good example of successful transition” (Trzaskowski 2002: 24).

This desire to strengthen the EU’s foreign policy and put its own experience in transition processes at its service was clearly shown during the Ukrainian crisis, in which Polish MEPs played a crucial role by mobilising all pertinent EP instruments, including delegations. This (hyper)activity is explained below in some detail, because, as one member of the EP Secretariat stated, “the work of delegations during the Ukrainian crisis is an exemplary case of how EP delegations ought to function”.

As soon as the electoral campaign for the presidential elections in Ukraine began, Polish MEPs started to lobby in the EP, insisting on the fact that the Parliament should start preparing its reaction in case elections did not develop according to democratic rules. An ad hoc delegation was set up to monitor the two rounds of the election. This delegation, led by the chairman of the delegation to the EU-Ukraine PCC, the Pole Marek M. Siwiec, was formed by 7 MEPs, four of which were Poles.

After the second round (21 November), the delegation’s MEPs, working as electoral observers, declared, together with other international organizations that monitored the electoral process, that results had been rigged. During the meeting of the AFET committee on 24 and 25 November, which was attended by Javier Solana, Polish MEPs requested to discuss first the Ukrainian crisis during the plenary session of 1 December, to issue a resolution condemning the electoral results and to immediately send another EP delegation. On 1 December, just after the plenary session, a delegation headed by the Polish Vice-president of the EP, Jacek E. Saryusz-Wolski, Marek M. Siwiec and the chairman of the AFET, Elmar Brok, left for Kiev to show the EP’s solidarity with the Ukrainian people and encourage a peaceful solution to the crisis. A ten-member delegation, also led by Jacek E. Saryusz-Wolski, was sent again to monitor the re-run of the second round of the presidential elections, turning into the fourth EP delegation sent to Kiev in less than two months.

The role played by Polish MEPs in particular, and by the new member states in general, in the crisis was publicly acknowledged by many MEPs. For example, the German Green Rebecca Harms stated, in response to a speech by Bronislaw Geremek, “I am proud of you. Thank God that there are here some new member states that have performed a well-organized policy towards
The members of the Secretariat that were interviewed for this research clearly acknowledged the contribution made by new member states, which invigorated the delegations related to Eastern Europe. On their part, Polish MEPs also expressed their satisfaction with the role the EP and the delegations, turned into true platforms for action, played in the Ukrainian crisis.

Quite the opposite, the opinions of Polish MEPs on the delegation for relations with Belarus were more about “frustration.” Since there is no contact with Belarusian official representatives, the EP delegation has no counterpart. Indeed, as stated by one Polish MEP, this irrelevance was manifested in the fact that there was scant competition between MEPs to be appointed as members in the delegation for relations with Belarus. The 6 Poles of this delegation of 14 MEPs are playing a great part in reinvigorating this delegation, with the objective of promoting civil society in Belarus and trying to attract more attention from the EU for that country. The future presidential elections are thought to be, however, the beginning of a new era of opportunities to achieve some democratic progress in Belarus.

The analysis of the role of Polish MEPs within the IPDs shows that they have a striking degree of coordination among themselves, even higher than the coordination with their respective Political Groups. The information obtained through interviews and questionnaires reveals that, when dealing with the issues of delegations, in most cases Polish MEPs consider that the coordination with other Polish MEPs from other Political Groups (and in 3 cases also the government and national diplomatic services) is at least as important as the coordination within their own Political Group. This pattern was the one followed during the Ukrainian crisis, when various informal meetings took place among Polish MEPs in order to coordinate their performance and organize the task of lobbying in their respective groups.

On what lies behind this significant national coordination, one may argue that there are two main reasons. First, given their newness to the EP relative to other MEPs, it is just natural that Polish MEPs tend more to act together to consolidate their position in the EP and organise the lobbying for important posts and rapporteurships, since national representation is a basic criteria when making the appointments in the EP. And, second, the relative small size of national Polish delegations within the main Political Groups may

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18 Agence Europe, Friday 3 December 2004.
also have made Polish MEPs more prone to coordinate lobbying strategies with Polish national delegations of other PG for those issues considered a matter of Poland’s ‘national interest’. Indeed, due to the idiosyncrasy of the Polish political scene, only 33 from the 54 Polish MEPs are members of the main Political Groups (19 in the Group of the European People’s Party, 10 in the Socialist Group and 4 in the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe.) Polish national delegations are then much smaller than those of other middle-sized countries such as Spain, which also has 54 MEPs (24 in the EP and 24 in the Socialists); or even in comparison to the size of smaller member states’ delegations (for example, the 24 MEPs of Hungary are divided in 13 in the EPP and 9 among the Socialists).19

Attitudes and performance of Spanish MEPs. For Spanish MEPs, ascribing themselves to the delegations of Latin America and the Mediterranean is seen as something natural, given Spain’s proximity to these regions, whether such proximity is geopolitical, as is the case of the Mediterranean, or cultural, as is the case of Latin America. Therefore, the main reasons behind the election of those delegations were, as in the case of Poland, a mix between a personal sense of “brotherhood” and the fact that these are national priority areas. Likewise, the feeling that the EU is increasingly neglecting these regions played an important role. All Spanish MEPs interviewed for this study mentioned this last reason, and, consequently, it is not hard to conclude that one of the main tasks of Spanish MEPs within their delegations is to try to prioritise both the Mediterranean and Latin America in the EU’s agenda.

This concern about the increasing marginalisation of Spanish foreign policy priorities has remained a constant since the times of the European Political Cooperation, when “the Twelve’s orientation towards Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall generated a ‘periphery syndrome’ in Spain” (Barbé and Vasconcelos 1996: 260). From then on, Spain sought to define its priorities more clearly within the EPC, and later the CFSP, and tried to defend them by all means. The EU’s Eastern enlargement has further reinforced the perception that it is increasingly harder to promote Mediterranean and Latin American policies within the EU. Regarding the Mediterranean and the new EU Neighbourhood Policy’s impact on it, one Spanish MEP said that “there is a compelling need to attract attention to the

19 I thank Dr. Rafal Trzaskowski, to whom I owe this remark on the atypical small size of Polish national delegations.
Mediterranean countries” and considered the Neighbourhood Policy as a mixed blessing, since “on the one hand, it implies a new reinforcement of EU relations with its neighbours and, thus, a renewed impulse for Europe’s Mediterranean policy,” but, on the other, “the label is very important for its symbolic connotations and, therefore, the ‘Neighbourhood Policy’ risks diluting the current Mediterranean policy.”

In the case of Latin America, the perception was all the more clear. As a Spanish MEP put it, after the Eastern enlargement “Latin America is now a remote concern for the EU,” in contrast with the years when Manuel Marín and Abel Matutes were European Commissioners. Another Spanish MEP stated, in the same line, that “the attention given to this area has dramatically decreased” and claimed that renewed policies are crucial, because there are still severe problems in Latin America, despite the resolution of most of the bloody conflicts that affected the region during the 1980s.

Spanish MEPs have had a high profile in the work of the delegations of both the Mediterranean and Latin America, setting out initiatives and playing a relevant and visible role during inter-parliamentary meetings and in ad hoc delegations. Indeed, from the outset, they have tried to promote the establishment of bi-regional relations between the EU and both areas, furthering a parliamentary dimension in them. This is the case of the Mediterranean. Spanish MEPs were staunch promoters of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum, first, and, later, of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly. Some Spanish MEPs have also been trying to promote a similar bi-regional parliamentary assembly between Latin America and the EU, by replacing the system of parliamentary conferences with an EU-Latin American Transatlantic Assembly. This is only one of the proposals behind the idea of building up a new association with Latin America. Other proposals in this direction have been the creation of a Latin American Charter of Peace and Security, a European-style Free Trade Area of the Americas or a bi-regional solidarity fund.20 Due to this regional conception of relations with Latin America, there is some disillusion with the recent split of the former two IPDs with Latin American countries into five. According to

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one Spanish MEP, “although it is fair that countries with different degree of
relations with the EU also have a differentiated parliamentary framework, this
might mean dispersion and duplication, and might decrease the visibility of
the region”.

Spanish MEPs generally provide a very positive evaluation of the work
done through the delegations as “an intense task of parliamentary diplomacy”.
In their view, delegations have reacted rapidly when facing political crises or
natural catastrophes. It has been relatively easy to regularly assemble
delegations to monitor elections; delegation chairmen have been able to
participate in ministerial conferences, as those of the Proceso de San José or
Grupo de Río, or business encounters as the EU-Mercosur business forum; or
to meet with top officials of these countries, as was the case of the meeting
between the Spanish Partido Popular’s MEPs with Fidel Castro in La Habana,
and with various representatives of civil society.21 Some MEPs noted that, in
their view, the visits of EP delegations received an important coverage by the
media in these countries and that, in fact, they perceived that there is a “great
demand for Europe” both in the Mediterranean countries and Latin America.

In conclusion, Spanish MEPs basically have a national perspective
when dealing with external relations issues in the EP, and, just like the Polish
MEPs, they consider they are playing a special role and being advocates of
some regions, independently of their political group. However, there seems
some signs of politicisation are appearing among of Spanish MEPs’ views on
both the Mediterranean and Latin America. The recent split between the
Spanish Socialists and the Populars on the issue of Cuba is an example of the
way in which the traditional consensus behind Spain’s foreign policy and its
priority areas is gradually eroding.

Attitudes and performance of German MEPs. Assessing the German profile within
the delegations is difficult since, as stated above, they do not establish special
priorities in regional terms. During the 1990s, the top priority of German
foreign policy was to create a peaceful and stable environment in Central and
Eastern Europe, by means of the EU’s enlargement, and by promoting
regional integration and the Einbindung (linkage) of Russia and Ukraine to
Western institutions. It is obvious that Germany continues to be much more
interested in the EU’s Eastern dimension than in the Mediterranean or Latin

21 “Eurodiputados del PP viajan a Cuba para impulsar la ayuda a la isla”, El País, 21
February 1998.
America, but now that Germany has ceased to be a *Frontstaat*, its policy interests are more focused on horizontal domains, such as human rights or conflict prevention, where the country has an important international profile.

This lack of narrowly defined national priorities is reflected in the German MEPs’ explanation of the reasons behind their appointment to a particular delegation. For many of them, it was their personal interest in the countries targeted by the delegation (professional expertise, language proficiency, personal links with the country/region, and others), while many more argued that their Political Group decided their appointment. But practically none of them argued, as Polish or Spanish MEPs did, that their choice was due to the importance of the region in national terms. As expressed by a German MEP, a certain division of tasks between MEPs of different countries is allowed and even welcomed. One German MEP declared that it was obvious that “Latin America, for example, is a domain for Spanish MEPs; Eastern European countries are now mainly for new member states' MEPs,” and in the case of German MEPs, he argued that it is also natural that a significant part of them were appointed to delegations for relations with Asian countries, in which the commercial issues are salient in the agenda. Nonetheless, apart from the general interest in trade and the commitment to human rights, the German MEPs interviewed for this study did not identify a specific regional or horizontal domain to be considered as specifically “German.”

The pattern of German MEPs' performance within delegations also shows the same lack of a nationally defined point of reference. Interviews and questionnaires from German MEPs show that, in the vast majority of cases, the most important channel of coordination is their European Political Group or national delegation within the Group, but they do not attempt to coordinate with German MEPs of other Political Groups, nor with the Government or other national officials.

The absence of a precise definition of what German national interests are does not mean that the German MEPs’ profile within delegations and in foreign policy issues in general is low or that national alliances do not matter. It is quite the opposite. German MEPs have normally thought to be very active in this domain and particularly keen to upgrade the EP’s role in external relations, a political aim that has been always shared among the main German political forces. In this regard, Elmar Brok, who heads the AFET Committee since 1999 and whose leadership is undisputed, has been one of the main
promoters of turning the EP into an effective international actor, drafting proposals and demands for a real control on foreign policy, for extending EP budgetary powers in this domain, and for a good access to information from the Commission and, especially, the Council.

Indeed, the means for channelling German interests are much more diverse and indirect than those at the disposal of Spanish and Polish officials. As stated by Peter Katzenstein (1997), Germany in the EU has mainly an “indirect institutional power,” that is power in shaping the rules of the game, which in turn gives Germany a great deal of leverage in the EU system and in agenda-setting. This way of exercising power comes precisely from Germany’s post-Second World War embeddedness in international and European institutions and its wide reluctance to undertake unilateral actions and to use hard means of power as a reaction. Some authors have alluded to a distinctive national or state identity (Banchoff 1999; Katzenstein 1997); others, more specifically to political culture (Duffield 1998, 1999), but the weight of historical experiences is always placed on the basis of Germany’s stance in favour of further integration of European foreign policy and of reinforcing supranational institutions, especially the EP. Since its reunification, some scholars and analysts have argued that Germany’s European identity may be changing towards a more assertive, pragmatic and self-conscious one (the so-called ‘normalisation’ hypothesis) but, nonetheless, Germany continues to maintain an integrationist stance and continues to show some reluctance to plainly speak about national interest in the foreign policy domain. There is, indeed, a wide consensus among German political parties and society in general that the EP’s powers in foreign policy should be increased if EU foreign policy is to continue advancing, a stance that is miles away from other big, old EU member states as France or Great Britain.

Within the European Parliament, Germany’s institutional power is reinforced by the fact that the length of work of the majority of German MEPs clearly exceeds that of the MEPs of other old EU member states (approximately two thirds of the 99 German MEPs are now at least in their third parliamentary term). This makes German MEPs accumulate a great deal of expertise in concrete domains, but also regarding the way institutions work.

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22 See also Bulmer, Jeffery and Paterson (2000).
23 For comparisons between Germany’s approach to European foreign policy with that of other EU member states, see Wagner (2001) and Marcussen et al. (1999); Joerissen and Stahl (2003).
But, obviously, a main source of the institutional power of German MEPs is their large number and the big size of their national delegations within the Groups, especially within the European People’s Party, the biggest party of the Eurochamber (the German delegation in the EPP Group is by far the largest one—it nearly doubles the second largest one; the third largest one within the Socialists; and the largest, by far, within the Greens). All these elements considered together provide an explanation of the lesser need of German MEPs to maintain a high national coordination and of their wider reliance on the Political Groups as the main organizational units, even in foreign policy issues.

This analysis shows that Polish and Spanish MEPs have an important national point of reference when choosing delegation, and their special interests are clearly acknowledged and even welcomed by MEPs of other nationalities. More to the point, national coordination in the work of delegations is much more important in the case of Polish MEPs and, to a lesser extent, in the case of Spanish MEPs, while there is little evidence of such coordination in the case of Germany, for which national political parties and national political groups are the main references.

Picking up the thread of the question posed at the beginning of this section, it seems that even if MEPs have a clear perception of what the national priorities of their own countries are, generally their actions within delegations does not respond to an egoistic national rationale, but to a more sophisticated idea of pushing the EU to act with a higher profile in certain areas, in the benefit not only of one country but of the EU as a whole (or at least what is their view on how the EU should act in the world stage), as well as third countries’ people.

**Conclusion**

The overview of the functions of IPDs presented in the first part of this chapter leads to the conclusion that delegations not only comply with traditional functions of conventional diplomacy (informative, representative and negotiating-organizational), but they also play a more sophisticated role by indirectly facilitating parliamentary control on other institutions working in foreign policy. Compared to the parliamentary diplomacy developed by
national parliaments and by other parliamentary bodies, the EP’s diplomacy is more refined, both in terms of its wider scope (IPDs cover nearly all regions of the world) and in terms of continuity of parliamentary contacts. The overall assessment is that delegations are instruments with an important potential to enhance the EP's role in foreign policy and external relations.

However, delegations are sometimes underused or even misused when MEPs’ participation is low or when expenses are not rationalised. Some general orientations to improve the work of delegations can be pointed out: increasing efficiency of delegations is not a matter of setting up more delegations, celebrating more meetings or allocating more resources to them, but about rationalising their work and the funds made available to them. Inter-parliamentary meetings, for example, may not need a long catalogue of declarations, but, instead, to put more effort on making concrete, realizable proposals. Regarding the aims of delegations, while it is true that ad hoc delegations normally score very good results, some delegations suffer from “short-termism.” That is why more emphasis should be put on planning long-term strategies and, ideally, granting greater continuity of MEPs in some delegations to accumulate some expertise. Besides, more room of manoeuvre should be left for delegations. For example, the Council should accept the inclusion of MEPs in EU delegations during international negotiations held at the ministerial level. From now on, the relationship between the EP’s delegations and the future external service of the EU should be studied and new possibilities of interconnection and better coordination thought out.

Concerning the enjeux between national perspectives of MEPs and their work within delegations, it is clear that strong national sensibilities predominate at least in the case of Polish and Spanish MEPs. Their aim is to put the Eastern dimension and the Mediterranean and Latin America, respectively, at the top of the EU agenda. Delegations are just one more instrument to upgrade national priorities and sensibilities in the agenda of the EP and the EU. This process of trying to promote specific foreign policy priorities through the lens of the EU constitutes one of the many facets of the many-sided and multidirectional process of “Europeanisation”, in this case, from below. This Europeanisation of MEPs’ views does not mean that there is no concurrence between different national sensibilities, even to the point of a zero-sum game. As previously said, some Spanish MEPs are clearly aware of the impact enlargement has had in somehow reducing their room of manoeuvre, while Polish MEPs are determined to maintain the Eastern
dimension as a top priority in the EP's and the EU’s agenda. As in the framework of the Council, foreign policy in the EP is about Eastern and Southern caucuses competing for the centre's attention (Rummel 1996: 62). But unlike the Council, where an excessive concern for national priorities may be paralysing, in the case of the EP, the jostling between different sensibilities never goes in detriment of European foreign policy. Far from it, this plurality is precisely what pushes the European foreign policy machinery to go further.

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Sommer, Renate: MEP, Germany, Group of the European People's Party. Vice-chairwoman of EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee.

Szymaski, Konrad: MEP, Poland, Union for Europe of the Nations Group, Member of the Delegation for relations with Belarus.
Annex 1: Composition of Inter-parliamentary Delegations (Europe)

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Source: Elaborated by the author from EP’s documents.
## Composition of Inter-parliamentary Delegations (Non-Europe)

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*In brackets, the number of substitutes*  

Source: Elaborated by the author from EP’s documents.